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Cool dudes and African body-image-sports food and energy drink consumption in a sports-resource-deficient urban area in South Africa

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Nutritional supplements (sports food) are used by competitive and recreational athletes of all ages. These are often people in predominantly affluent communities, who can afford the cost of nutritional supplements. The situation is further exacerbated by the general pressure placed on certain groups to use supplements. Young sports participants who are engaged in developmental and competitive phases of sport, in particular, encounter peer pressure to use supplements and to enhance body image. As a consequence the supplement industry has grown to meet the increasing demand. Food movements on the other hand, are a growing and a diverse phenomenon globally. In South Africa, where the youth are the majority of the large unemployed sector, job creation for youth in poor communities is a key development goal. Recently there is evidence of a socio-cultural shift where young people have become involved in urban food gardens. There is a high level of bodily awareness, often with less access to formal sporting facilities. Township youth may thus redirect their ideas of a good body-image into new urban food movements. These youth may consume sports food and energy drinks if they are able to purchase these items. The research objective is to explore the supplement and energy drink labels and other sources of information that influence purchasing decisions and trends that may contribute to the body- image aspiration, in the respective communities.

Biography

Darlene Miller is a Senior Lecturer at the Witwatersrand School of Governance. She has obtained her Doctorate in Sociology from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA. Her research is multi-disciplinary with specific interests in food retailing, food movements and the regional political economy in South Africa.

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